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A further study of figures issued by Communist sources indicates that the regime did not have exact knowledge of the situation in many areas. To cite one example, an announcement of the results of the 1952 investigation of Marriage Law implementation included "incomplete statistics" on deaths attributed to the existence of problems and mistreatment connected with the "feudal family" system. According to these figures, 4,105 women were killed or driven to suicide in the East China Region between January and August, 1952; and 356 women and 161 young men suffered the same fate in the Northwest Region during the first half of 1952. In lieu of figures for the Central-South Region, the report mentioned 606 young men and women met violent deaths as a result of marriage disputes in 39 hsien (out of a total of 86)in Hunan.[23]

It seems reasonable to assume that the figures are incomplete and the categories not comparable because the Communists had no more accurate material to offer. If the incidence of violence in connection with marital and family disputes is truly reflected in these figures, their extension into yearly rates shows these deaths occurred at the rate of less than two per hundred-thousand population in the Northwest Region, less than four per hundred-thousand in the East China Region, and less than nine per

23. C.B., 236, p. 5.

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hundred-thousand in Hunan. It should be remembered, however, that these ratios are based on incomplete figures and that the incidence of violence may have resulted as much from Communist pressures as from the authoritarian character of the traditional family.

Divorce and marriage figures released by the Communists are equally difficult to render meaningful because of gaps in statistics and the different time spans and categories which are given for the figures cited. For the nation as a whole, the number of divorces was reported to have risen from 186,000 in 1950 (the last seven months of it under the new Marriage Law), to 409,500 in 1951, and to 398,000 in the first half of 1952.[24] The latter figure is only slightly higher than the number of divorces for all of 1952 in the United States, which has about one-quarter the population of China.[25] The Communist press announced that between January and May, 1951 the Justice Department in the Central-South Region handled 32,881 cases dealing with marital disputes, constituting 60 per cent of the total number of civil cases in the region. Of the marital disputes, 25,992 were divorce suits, and most of these were initiated by the wives, according to the press announcement[26] A similar source at a later date reported

24. Ibid., 243, p. 3.

25. Divorces in the United States during 1952 totaled 292,000. See the World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1955, Harry Hansen, ed., New York, New York World Telegram and The Sun, 1955, p. 312.

26. S.C.M.P., 171, p. 16.